

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ANTANA 01705 081457Z
ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANTANANARIVO 1705

STADIS////////////////

FOR HARROP FROM BARRETT

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OGEN
SUBJ: STAFFING LIMITATIONS/REDUCTIONS

REF: A) STATE 224187; B) ANT 1681

1. I REGRET THAT ANY RECOMMENDATION FOR CLOSURE OF DAO
ANTANANARIVO WILL HAVE TO BE MADE WITHOUT MY CONCURRENCE,
WHICH I COULD NOT GIVE WITHOUT CONTRADICTING EVERYTHING
I HAVE BEEN SAYING FOR A YEAR AND A HALF. PRESENCE OF
A DAO HERE IS IMPORTANT FOR TWO REASONS AS FAR AS
MADAGASCAR ITSELF IS CONCERNED: A) THE GOVERNMENT IS
HEADED BY A MILITARY MAN, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF OTHER
MILITARY MEN IN HIGH GOVERNMENT POSITIONS, AND MORE AND
MORE TASKS, NORMALLY IN THE CIVIL DOMAIN, ARE BEING
DELEGATED TO THE MILITARY, INCLUDING SOME PHASES OF
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMERCIAL IMPORTS; B) OUR MAIN
CONCERN IN MADAGASCAR IS ITS FUTURE MILITARY ORIENTATION
SPECIFICALLY WHETHER IT WILL EVENTUALLY OR SOONER
PROVIDE THE SOVIETS WITH ACCESS TO ITS EXCELLENT AND
STRATEGICALLY LOCATED HARBOR OF DIEGO SUAREZ. AN
INDICATOR OF THIS POSSIBILITY IS THE AMOUNT AND
CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH MILITARY EQUIPMENT IS COMING
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IN FROM SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. A DEFENSE ATTACHE CAN
PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE BY PROVIDING CONTACT "BETWEEN
PROFESSIONALS" WITH OFFICERS IN BOTH MILITARY AND
CIVILIAN POSITIONS, BY FOLLOWING UP ON THE MILITARY'S
ACTIVITIES IN BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN FIELDS, AND
BY KEEPING TRACK OF WEAPONS IMPORTS AND THE MILITARY
RELATIONS OF THE HOST COUNTRY WITH THE SOCIALIST

COUNTRIES. AS THE LAST NAMED SUBJECT IS SURROUNDED WITH GREAT SECRECY HERE, THE EYE OF A PROFESSIONAL IS ALL THE MORE USEFUL IN DETECTING THE PRESENCE OF NEW WEAPONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS IN TERMS OF NECESSARY TRAINING, SPARE PARTS, BACK UP, ETC. REF B CITES SOME RECENT REPORTS OF THIS NATURE.

2. THE DESIRABILITY OF A DAO IN ANTANANARIVO IN THE WIDER REGIONAL CONTECT OF THE SW INDIAN OCEAN MUST ALSO BE CONSIDERED. IF THE INDIAN OCEAN IS IMPOR- TANT ENOUGH TO WARRANT ESTABLISHMENT OF A MAJOR NAVAL FACILITY, TO SEND IN THREE TASK GROUPS A YEAR, AND TO DISCUSS WITH THE SOVIETS, THEN MAYBE IT IS IMPOR- TANT ENOUGH TO HAVE A MILITARY OBSERVER IN ITS SW PART, AT THE INTERSECTION OF INDIAN OCEAN AND SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEMS, AND ON THE SUPERTANKER ROUTE.

3. IT IS TRUE THAT UNDER THE PRESENT REGIME PERSONNEL OF DAO HAVE BEEN SOMEWAHT CIRCUMSCRIBED IN THEIR CONTACTS WITH MALAGASY MILITARY AND THIS HAS CUT DOWN ON THEIR ABILITY TO REPORT FULLY ON MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS. BUT THIS SITUATION NEED NOT NECESSARILY LAST AND AN IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS COULD ALSO IMPROVE ACCESS TO THE MALAGASY MILITARY, AND RESULT IN MORE DETAILED REPORTING.

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4. REGARDING PARA 4 REFTTEL A, I REGRET THAT HIGH LEVEL OF COOPERATION AND INTERGRATED REPORTING WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH WITH DAO, AND WHICH EARNED FAVORABLE COMMENT BY INSPECTORS, SHOULD BE USED AS JUSTIFICATION FOR ABOLITION OF DAO. I CAN ASSURE DEPARTMENT THAT STATE OFFICERS HAVE NOT BEEN SHIRKING ANY OF THEIR DUTIES AND FOISTING THEM OFF ON DAO. IT IS JUST THAT IN VIEW OF PENURY OF STATE PERSONNEL AT THIS POST (TWO SUBSTANTIVE OFFICERS), WE HAVE BEEN GLAD TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF COOPERATIVE AND ABLE DATT TO HELP US UNDERSTAND AND REPORT ON TOTATILY OF LOCAL SCENE. THIS HAS BEEN TRUE IN CASE OF PAO AS WELL. I RECOGNIZE INCUMBENT'S HIGH QUALIFICATIONS, PARTICULARLY HIS ABILITY TO DEAL EASILY IN A FRANCOPHONE MILIEU, MAY NOT BE FOUND IN HIS SUCCESSOR. HOWEVER, LATTER DOES SEEM TO HAVE GOOD SERVICE RECORD AND TRAINING IN INTELLIGENCE AND I HOPE HE WILL BE COMING OUT HERE.

5. I BELIEVE IT IS BEST NOT TO COUNT ON ANY TDY COVERAGE OF THIS POST IN ABSENCE OF A DAO. WE HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO CONCUR IN VISITS TO THIS POST BY

MILITARY IN VIEW OF PAST EXPERIENCE AND BECAUSE WE
DOUBT THAT MERE OBSERVATION VISITS BY U.S. MILITARY
WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE. OUR BEST WAY OF KEEPING UP
WITH MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS AFTER DAO'S CLOSURE WOULD
BE BY CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE FRENCH WHO WILL
HAVE ONLY REMAINING DATA AND WITH WHOM INCUMBENT HAS
HAD REGULAR AND PRODUCTIVE CONTACT. BARRETT

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